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UNCLAS ZAGREB 000367

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SUBJECT: QANTIWAR PROTESTS STAGED IN ZAGREB AND OTHER CROATIAN CITIES

1. SUMMARY: A FEW THOUSAND NGO ACTIVISTS AND THEIR SUPPORTERS GATHERED ON FEBRUARY 15 IN ZAGREB AND OTHER CROATIAN CITIES TO PROTEST AGAINST A WAR IN IRAQ. THE POLICE ESTIMATED THAT THE CENTRAL RALLY IN DOWNTOWN ZAGREB
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GATHERED UP TO 2,000 PROTESTERS. INTELLECTUALS AND ARTISTS WHO ADDRESSED THE RALLY CALLED FOR UNIVERSAL DISARMAMENT AND DEMANDED THAT THE GOC WITHDRAW ANY SUPPORT FOR THE USG POLICY ON IRAQ. EXCEPT FOR A U.S. FLAG BURNING IN FRONT OF THE U.S. EMBASSY, NO INCIDENTS WERE REPORTED. THE CROATIAN AUTHORITIES PROVIDED EXCELLENT POLICE PROTECTION FOR THE CHANCERY. END SUMMARY

ENOUGH OF WARS!

2. AS THEY HAD ANNOUNCED, SOME THIRTY CROATIAN NGO'S STAGED ON FEBRUARY 15 ANTI-WAR DEMONSTRATIONS IN DOWNTOWN ZAGREB UNDER THE SLOGAN "ENOUGH OF WARS!" SMALL PROTEST RALLIES -- RANGING FROM A FEW DOZEN TO A FEW HUNDRED PARTICIPANTS -- WERE ALSO HELD IN OTHER CROATIAN CITIES AND TOWNS INCLUDING SPLIT, OSIJEK, PULA, ZADAR, DUBROVNIK, VUKOVAR AND KNIN. WHILE THE FOCUS WAS ON U.S. IRAQ POLICY, PETITIONS WERE SIGNED IN ZAGREB AND PULA DEMANDING THAT CROATIA NOT JOIN NATO.

3. ALTHOUGH ALL LOCAL MEDIA REPORTED THAT AN ESTIMATED 10,000 PROTESTERS GATHERED IN ZAGREB, THE POLICE TOLD US THAT THE NUMBER WAS BETWEEN 1,500 AND 2,000 PEOPLE. THE RALLY STARTED AT THE MAIN SQUARE IN DOWNTOWN ZAGREB WHERE HALF A DOZEN INTELLECTUALS AND ARTISTS ADDRESSED THE CROWD. THE MOST PROMINENT SPEAKER WAS FORMER SCIENCE AND ARTS ACADEMY PRESIDENT IVAN SUPEK WHO CALLED FOR MOTHERHOOD AND APPLE PIE VIRTUES SUCH AS UNIVERSAL DISARMAMENT AND A WORLD COMMUNITY BASED ON SOLIDARITY AND PEACE. OTHERS CALLED ON THE CROATIAN GOVERNMENT TO DO A U-TURN AND DISASSOCIATE
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ITSELF FROM THE VILNIUS GROUP DECLARATION.

4. DEMONSTRATORS CARRIED BANNERS WITH FAMILIAR SLOGANS: "IRAQ IS NOT ONLY SADDAM, U.S. IS NOT ONLY BUSH"... "FOOD, NOT ARMS"... "TERROR IS NOT AN ANSWER TO TERROR"... "NO BLOOD FOR OIL"... "POLITICIANS TO THE TRENCHES"... "NOT IN OUR NAME." THE RALLIES IN ZAGREB AND OTHER CITIES WERE ATTENDED BY A NUMBER OF POLITICAL FIGURES INCLUDING FORMER MINISTER OF DEFENSE JOZO RADOS (AND CURRENT MEMBER OF THE COALITION), ITALIAN MINORITY REPRESENTATIVE FURIO RADIN, SDP'S MP PAVLE KALINIC, AND GOVERNOR OF ISTRIA IVAN JAKOVIC (IDS).

5. THE ONLY INCIDENT DURING THE RALLY WE SAW IN FRONT OF THE EMBASSY -- WHICH WAS GUARDED BY SOME 150 POLICE OFFICERS -- WAS THE BURNING OF A U.S. FLAG "ADORNED" WITH SWASTIKAS BY A GROUP OF ABOUT TWENTY INDIVIDUALS WHO IDENTIFIED THEMSELVES AS "ANARCHISTS OF THE ANTI-FASCIST ACTION," A GROUP WHOSE NAME SOUNDS EQUALLY ABSURD IN THE ORIGINAL CROATIAN. AFTER LESS THAN AN HOUR OF DEMONSTRATIONS IN FRONT OF THE EMBASSY, PROTESTERS RETURNED TO THE MAIN SQUARE TO SIGN PETITIONS AND DANCE TO MUSIC.

6. BELGRADE MINIMIZE CONSIDERED.

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